DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 166 094 SO 011 466

AUTHOR Hepburn, Mary A.
TITLE Grass Roots Improvement: A New Pattern in Citizenship Education.
PUB DATE [78]
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (Houston, Texas, November 22-25, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizenship; *Curriculum Development; *Educational Change; Educational Objectives; Educational Practice; Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; *Financial Support; *Local Government; Program Descriptions; School Districts; *State Programs
IDENTIFIERS Georgia

ABSTRACT

Growing emphasis on improving citizenship education at the local school system level is promoting projects which are smaller in size and cost, broader in objectives, and which motivate learning by focusing on local issues. This gradual shift from national curriculum reform programs is a result of the realization that students lack basic knowledge of state government and are deficient in citizenship skills, and that people prefer to be involved in local issues where they may have an impact. Increased funding from state and local agencies is another factor for increasing local curriculum programs. The newer citizenship education projects involve students, teachers, administrators, social science educators, and other university specialists in curriculum change. A case in point is the Title IV project in Georgia designed to define sequential citizenship skills, knowledge, and values objectives and to implement a program involving school and community groups in developing, reviewing, revising, and carrying out the objectives. Goals of the Georgia project are concerned with students' understanding of (1) the responsibilities of U.S. citizenship, (2) the role of the individual in the political decision-making process, (3) principles of individual rights, and (4) knowledge of current public issues and the skills for evaluating alternative choices. A committee of community leaders, state and local government officials, and interested citizens serves as an advisory and review board. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary A. Hepburn

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED166094

GRASS ROOTS IMPROVEMENT: A NEW PATTERN IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Mary A. Hepburn
University of Georgia

The improvement of citizenship education is a top priority among social studies professionals in these last years of the seventies. Variously approached as "political education," "civic education," or "law-focused education," education for citizenship is receiving widespread, renewed attention. Not that citizenship education was completely neglected in the recent past. As one area of the "new social studies" it received large-scale federal funding for several national development projects.[1] Typically those projects were initiated in the research and development centers of large universities and were supported directly by grants from the federal government. They espoused goals and objectives for a national citizenry, and they sought to promote educational improvement mainly through new curriculum materials. The content of their curricula focused mainly on national political issues and on federal governing processes. The end products of these projects were intended for national distribution usually through publishing houses.

SO 011 466

Currently, a different pattern of citizenship education improvement is emerging. Changes in the focus, conceptualization, size, funding and approach to citizenship education appear to be shifting the reform effort to the "grass roots," i.e., to the local school system. Recent

projects organized to review and improve citizenship education in the schools are smaller in size and cost because they are located in one or a few school districts. However, their objectives are broader since instructional materials are but one of several vehicles of improvement including staff development and curriculum revision. These local projects are supported by federal funds which are channeled through state and local government agencies. They attempt to arouse student interest and motivate learning by focusing on issues of local concern. The end product sought is usually expressed in terms of measurable changes in student performance or competencies.

Examples are evident in all sections of the country. Just a few of these are: State Government in Action, project of the Louisiana State Department of Education; Civic Literacy Project, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; Active Citizenship Education, project of the North Carolina Department of Instruction; Citizenship Today and Tomorrow, project of the Maine Department of Education; Curriculum Organization for Responsibility Education, project of the Illinois Office of Public Instruction and Improving Citizenship Education, project of the Georgia Department of Education -- all supported by funds from the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title IV. There are many other Title IV projects, and in addition, there are numerous law-focused education projects in many states, such as the Law in a Free Society project of several California school districts supported by funds from the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and law education programs in several Illinois school system supported by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission with funds from the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.[2]

Factors Contributing to Decentralization

What is influencing this gradual shift from broad, national curriculum reform programs in citizenship education to smaller, more localized projects? Several factors appear influential. One is the widely publicized evidence of deficiencies in the political education of young people as revealed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a project of the Education Commission of the State. In 1973 NAEP reported the results of their first national survey of political knowledge and political attitudes.[3] Performance on this test was considered quite unsatisfactory by educators, academicians and public leaders alide. Recently, the results of a second round of NAEP's test of political knowledge attitudes indicated a notable overall decline in the scores of 13 and 17 year olds. Director Roy H. Forbes reported in early 1978 that student scores dropped in each of five categories: "structure and function of government, political process, Constitutional rights, respect for others and international affairs."[4]

National Assessment also reported a decline of 13% in the numbers of 17-year-olds who could identify their state governor, and only 55% of these students could identify their state assembly as belonging to the legislative branch of government. Twenty-two percent responded, "I don't know."[5]

This lack of basic factual knowledge of state government coupled with clear evidence of declining citizenship proficiencies in young people has undoubtedly caused policy makers in many states to search for ways to "do something" locally to improve citizenship education

of young people. In some states selected citizenship competencies have become part of the overall criterion-referenced testing program. And in states where educational specialists have defined practical "life-role" outcomes for schooling, practical citizenship skills are prominent on the list.

In part, the shift to local citizenship education improvement appears to reflect an overall change in reform movements in the U.S. Current public involvement in issues tends to be less visionary and more practical than in the sixties and early seventies. People are more actively involved in issues at the local level where it seems possible to have an impact. For example, a recent article in Newsweek reported the trend toward local citizen action.

> Unlike citizens' groups of the past, which generally took on such big national issues as the Vietnam war, the environment or civil rights, today's activists tend to zero in on local issues -- utility rates, property taxes, red-lining by banks or even a new neighborhood traffic light. The new groups are low key and realistic, rejecting the grand optimism, moral outrage and emotional fervor that characterized the movements of the 1960s.[6]

The newer citizenship projects tend to fit this pattern in that they are locally organized, serve a visible population and tend also to focus student attention on issues prominent in the state and/or local community as a means to stimulate student involvement and develop "participation skills." This appears to fit an important requirement of "good citizenship," as defined in a nationwide study by the Civic Education Project of the National Council For the Social Studies over a decade ago.[7] Their report stressed that schools must attempt to develop citizens who are not only "informed" and "analytical" but who are also "committed and involved."

Another important force contributing to decentralization of citizenship education improvement is the increased funding emanating from state and local government agencies. A large portion of this local support is a result of the decentralization of federal educational funding. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and juvenile justice and crime prevention acts channel large amounts of federal support through state and local education agencies which set down their own program plans. Hence, most of the new citizenship programs are based in school districts where student need and organizational commitment to improvement have first been demonstrated.

Consequently, the locus of conceptualization and development has moved from the computer centers and "ivory towers" of university research centers to the real world of the schools. The roles of social studies educators, social scientists and other university specialists involved in citizenship education are shifting from development and experimentation to service and applied research. They work for and in the school system with teachers, curriculum directors and administrators to design, implement and test citizenship curriculum right in the school and community where feasibility and effectiveness can be carefully examined at every step. This approach is in sharp contrast to the dissemination tactics of the sixties and early seventies which were slow, trickle-down processes which reached some teachers through summer institutes, and eventually reached some students through the publication of new textbooks by national publishing houses. Originating at the grass roots level, the newer citizenship education projects take a systems approach to curriculum change as students, teachers, administrators, are involved

in the improvement effort from its inception. Ultimately, the improved system can be offered as a working model for citizenship education improvement by other schools in the state.

How are local level improvement projects in citizenship education initiated? How do they work, and what promise do they have for generating better citizenship education in the schools? As one who has worked closely with an ESEA Title IV project in Georgia, the author can provide a close-up description as a case in point.

An Example in Georgia

The Georgia State Department of Education carefully determined how it would utilize federal ESEA Title IV-C funds by conducting an assessment of a representative group of graduating high school seniors in the Spring of 1976. Five "areas of greatest need" were found and designated as the priority areas for state educational improvement. Citizenship-social studies was one priority area. Communication skills, mathematics-personal finance, health and science-technology-environment were the others.

When the Department of Education put out a call for proposals to all the school districts in the spring of 1977, part of the rationale was stated as follows: "These needs are sufficiently common throughout our state to justify having at least one system develop and demonstrate an approach that results in improved student learning that could be adopted by other school systems."[8] Based on the assumption that student learning is most likely to be affected when several school variables are involved, the proposal guidelines encouraged broad, system-wide improvement programs in each of the priority areas.

The Fulton County School System, a large populous district located in the suburban metro-Atlanta area, submitted a proposal for a three year program for improving citizenship education. It was drawn up with the assistance and cooperation of political education specialists from the Institute of Government and Department of Social Science Education at the University of Georgia. It set down a plan to define sequenced citizenship skills, knowledge and values objectives for kindergarten through twelfth grades. It defined a program which would involve school and community groups in the processes of developing, reviewing, revising and carrying out the objectives.

In the summer of 1977, applications from various school districts were reviewed by State Department of Education personnel and by a national panel of educational leaders who judged the quality of the proposals and the extent to which they addressed critical student needs. The Fulton County School System's proposal was selected for support in the citizenship-social studies area, and in October 1977, the Improving Citizenship Education Project (ICE) was initiated.

The project conceptualizes citizenship education as a means of preparing students for several levels of political interaction. The process of gaining political knowledge and skills is related to the day-to-day events which surround and involve the student (e.g. events in the peer group, family, school, city and county communities, the State of Georgia, the United States and the ever-shrinking world).

The project is guided by nine general goals. The development of specific objectives, instructional activities, teaching guidelines and the overall curriculum plan are geared toward these student learning outcomes:

1) understanding and acceptance of the responsibilities of U.S. citizenship.
2) understanding of the structure and operations of local, state and national government.
3) understanding of the roles of individuals in the political decision-making processes.
4) understanding of the principles of individual rights and learning to make choices in the context of concern for the society as a whole.
5) understanding of the U.S. legal system and a commitment to rule of law.
6) knowledge of current public issues and skills for evaluating alternative choices in regard to these issues.
7) understanding of the interdependence of the global community and the political processes in operation internationally.
8) understanding of the means to participate in school, local, state and national political processes.
9) understanding of the need for government and community services and the ways to secure, utilize and contribute to these services.

(Sample of how social studies objectives at each grade level can contribute to the realization of an overall goal.)

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION GOAL #4 - "THE STUDENT UNDERSTANDS BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS, LEARNING TO MAKE CHOICES IN THE CONTEXT OF CONCERN FOR THE WELL BEING OF THE SOCIETY AS A WHOLE."

(Government)	12. Propose feasible alternatives for resolving cases of conflicts between individual and societal interests.
(American History)	11. Trace the growth of civil liberties in U.S. history through political and judicial action.
(World History)	10. Determine the historical antecedents of guaranteeing the individual rights in ancient societies.
(State and Local Govt)	9. Analyze the U.S. court cases interpreting individual rights to determine ways in which the 14th Amendment has extended rights to the states.
(Georgia History)	8. Describe the historical content of the ten amendments and explain the significance of each for a democratic society. Compare the Georgia Bill of Rights with the U.S. Bill of Rights.
(Social Studies)	7. From other civilizations and governments of the world give examples of how individual rights were either extended or reduced in relation to the power of the state.
(Social Studies)	6. Demonstrate a willingness to listen to and consider the viewpoints of others in a role play of a conflict situation involving perceptions of individual rights.
(Social Studies)	5. State in their own words a summary of the guarantees of the bill of rights and give examples from personal surroundings.
(Social Studies)	4. Give examples of "tolerance," equal opportunity," and "group welfare" in school life and determine some ways in which they apply to the community.
(Social Studies)	3. Describe the extent and limits of freedom in several specific cases concerning students in the "school community."
(Social Studies)	2. Analyze the meaning of the democratic value of "respecting the rights of others" and demonstrate its application in the classroom and the school.
(Social Studies)	1. Differentiate between private and public property used by students and members of their families.
(Social Studies)	K. Differentiate between individual and group interests observing examples of when they are different and examples of when they are the same.

Improving Citizenship Education, Fulton County (Georgia) School System

The project's organization, staffing and procedures are good examples of the local approach to citizenship curriculum development. Needs were defined by the school system. The improvement process encompasses five variables which influence student learning in school -- the teachers, the social studies curriculum, instructional materials, school administrators and community resources. Although university specialists in content and instruction provide important contributions to designing, carrying out and evaluating the program, their roles are definitely assistance and service roles.

The ICE project leadership is formed of an alliance of school district and university personnel whose combined expertise includes educational supervision, curriculum development, instructional improvement, political and social science and evaluation. The overall project director is the social studies supervisor for the Fulton County School System. Working with the superintendent and building-level administrators and department heads, she organizes and arranges the curriculum design, teacher education, management support and school and community resource development activities of the project. She is well known by social studies teachers throughout the district for the supervisory work she has done for the past seven years assisting them with ideas, materials and staff development programs for improving social studies instruction for approximately 35,000 students in the system. Working closely with the director to organize and direct the flow of specialized services from the University of Georgia to the school system are two university coordinators. One is a government specialist from the Institute of Government who coordinates the review of substantive content, the identification and review

of resource materials, and the development of needed instructional materials. The other is a social science education professor who coordinates the curriculum design, staff development and evaluation efforts of the project.+

One characteristic of the Georgia State Plan for Title IV-C is the provision of a timetable that encourages detailed planning before action and careful piloting before full implementation. Apparently state education planners are attempting to avoid hasty or narrow efforts. Extensive planning and broad personnel involvement were required in the first year. Then, when the improvement design and program of implementation were favorably reviewed by both independent and state department evaluators at the end of the first year, the project began subsequent year of staff development and pilot testing, and is slated for district-wide implementation in the third year.

School and Community Involvement

Twenty-four schools--9 high schools and 15 elementary schools representative of the 19 high schools and 58 elementary schools in the district--were selected as pilot schools for the citizenship education curriculum. Teachers from the pilot schools are working with the project staff to define student learning objectives and design instructional activities to be integrated into the social studies curriculum from kindergarten through high school. The teachers are organized by grade levels into three teams -- early childhood, middle grades and high school. Principals

+ Improving Citizenship Education is directed by Helen Richardson, Social Studies Supervisor for the Fulton County School District. University of Georgia coordinators are Edwin L. Jackson, governmental associate in the Institute of Government and Mary A. Hepburn, Associate Professor of Social Science Education in the College of Education.

of all of the pilot schools attend information and review sessions with the teachers. Several administrators have become part of the working teams. University consultants in elementary and secondary social studies education and political science assist the teachers by contributing to staff development. In addition, citizenship education curriculum specialists from several national projects have offered instructional guidelines and demonstration lessons or assisted with the formative review of the project's work. Administrators and social studies teachers throughout the school district are apprised of the project's progress by newsletter.

A committee made up of community leaders, state and local government officials and interested citizens serves as an advisory and review board. Through this committee the project staff attempts to keep the community informed of its goals and activities and obtain suggestions and support for its program. For example, the committee has assisted in the development of the community resource file, which is a central listing of field trips, internship opportunities, guest speakers, participation activities—all sorts of resource people and community experiences in or near the school district which can contribute to direct, first-hand learning in the citizenship education program.

Students, teachers and administrators of a number of representative schools in the system are cooperating in an assessment of the citizenship attitudes and political knowledge of the students. The tests are being used to identify the specific areas in which competency must be improved. In addition, instruments are being designed to test for student and teacher changes related to the project's goals over the three-year improvement period.

Adaptation of Proven Methods and Materials

Improving Citizenship Education does not aim to develop a completely new set of instructional materials and methods. One feature of the project is the review and adaptation of tested products of other citizenship education programs wherever these are appropriate and useful for the Georgia project. Good development work has been done on various facets of citizenship education in recent years. To avoid "reinventing the wheel," these existing materials and teaching approaches are being surveyed and evaluated to determine if they can be adopted to meet the objectives of the curriculum. Media from various publishers and resource people from several national projects (e.g., Comparing Political Experiences, Indiana University, Citizenship Decision Making, Ohio State University, and Associated Schools Program, Carnegie-Mellon University) have already provided rich input for the curriculum design. Staff development assistance has been provided by consultants of the Institute for Political and Legal Education, an ESEA project in New Jersey.

Only those materials which are needed to supplement and complement those which are already available will be developed by the project. Obviously, the major development needs arise where the skill or information to be learned relates to the state or local community (e.g. materials designed for activities using community and school resources).

The project design is in itself expected to offer an adaptable method for improving citizenship education in the social studies programs of other school districts in the state. Learning objectives, teaching activities, course designs, staff development designs and instructional materials focusing on state issues will be disseminated throughout the state.

Summary

Many of the features of the Improving Citizenship Education project of the Fulton County, Georgia, School System are found in other local citizenship education projects around the country. Their conceptualization and purpose revolve around the observable needs of the students in the school district. Curriculum development is centered in the school system with teachers and administrators taking an early and active part in the process. Support is obtained through either a state or local government agency utilizing federal funds under locally established guidelines.

The new pattern of citizenship education reform looks to this observer-participant to be a healthy and promising change. The resources of the community, both human and physical, can contribute greatly to the citizenship curriculum in a manner that is not possible when citizenship programs are conceptualized and developed on a national scope in universities and publishing houses. Moreover, the vision and specialized knowledge of university scholars and researchers are not lost to the projects. Their services are welcomed, and their ideas can be applied and evaluated at each step of development in the real world of the schools. Perhaps most promising is the multi-variable systems approach to change which takes place within the school system. Teachers, administrators, curriculum guidelines, instructional materials -- all may be involved in a variety of modification and change efforts, which, in combination, may hold the greatest opportunities for improving the total school environment as it affects citizenship education.

Notes

1. e.g., The High School Curriculum Project in Government at Indiana University, the Social Studies Curriculum Project at Carnegie-Mellon University, and the Harvard Public Issues Project at Harvard University.

2. The author learned of a number of projects through personal communications with project staff. Other sources are the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Curriculum Report, September, 1977, and the Directory of Law-Related Educational Activities published by the American Bar Association (Norman Gross, ed., third edition). As of May, 1978, the U.S. Office of Education could provide no printed list of citizenship education curriculum projects supported under Title IV-C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, nor could the author obtain a central list of public school projects supported by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

3. National Assessment of Educational Progress, Political Knowledge and Attitudes, Report 03-SS-01, Washington: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973; National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP Newsletter, January - February, 1974.

4. National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP Bulletin, February, 1978; The Atlanta Journal, February 2, 1978.

5. NAEP Bulletin, press release dated February 2, 1978.

6. "Citizen-Band Lobbying," Newsweek, December 5, 1977.

7. Daniel Roselle, "Citizenship Goals for A New Age," Social Education, Vol. 30 (October, 1966) 415-420.

8. Georgia Department of Education, "General Announcement of Intent to Fund Developmental Demonstration Projects to Improve K-12 Student Performance," March, 1977.